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DE RUEHDS #0774/01 0791434
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 191434Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9996
INFO RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 0704
RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI 8956
RUEHMS/AMEMBASSY MUSCAT 0020
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 0986
RUEHYN/AMEMBASSY SANAA 1780

UNCLAS ADDIS ABABA 000774

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: AFIN MARR OTRA PREL MU YM DJ EG SA ET
SUBJECT: COUNTRY CLEARANCE IS GRANTED FOR AMBASSADOR
BLOOMFIELD AND DELEGATION

REF: STATE 27263

¶1. Embassy Addis Ababa welcomes Ambassador Lincoln P. Bloomfield, Jr., U.S. Special Envoy for Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS) Threat Reduction, PM/WRA Senior Policy Advisor Stephanie Pico, and PM/WRA Technical Advisor Michael Kunst to travel to Ethiopia March 27-28 and April 1, 2008. Lodging has been arranged at the Sheraton Hotel, telephone 251(011) 517-1717. Country clearance is granted subject to the actual security situation at the time of proposed travel. Travelers should re-confirm this clearance with the control officer 72 hours prior to commencement of travel, and consult the Department of State website at <http://travel.state.gov>. The purpose of travel is to consult with officials from the Embassy and host-nation government.

¶2. Control officer: Dante Paradiso, Deputy Political-Economic Chief; cell phone: 251(0)91 11-219618, office telephone number: 251(0)11 517-4289. The mission duty officer can be reached at 251(0)11 517-4000, cell phone 251(0)91 121-3437 or after hours at 251(0)11 124-2400. The Embassy pouch address is 2030 Addis Ababa Place, Washington, DC 20521-2030. The Embassy operating hours are Monday to Thursday from 7:45 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. On Fridays, from 7:45 a.m to 11:45 a.m.

¶3. Please be advised that effective immediately, all visitors must clearly state the purpose of their visit and the areas to be visited, as well as to check in with post upon arrival or the appropriate designated Embassy contact. All visitors must also report the results of their visit prior to departure to the Front Office. Visitors who alter their travel plans or focus of their visit without informing the Embassy, particularly travel to unauthorized, unsafe or "off limit" areas, or send reports on Ethiopia operations without clearing such messages with the Embassy will be denied future clearances. The sponsoring office of the visitor could also face future restrictions on country clearance requests for their travelers to Ethiopia. This policy is being implemented to ensure that all visitors follow strictly appropriate safety and security measures, especially avoiding travel to unsafe areas, and also as a result of visitors disregarding Embassy clearance procedures and conditions under which Chief of Mission authority is granted.

¶4. Entry Requirements: Post strongly recommends that Business/Tourist visas be obtained at the closest Ethiopian embassy to the traveler's point of origin. If that is not possible, for persons traveling on an ordinary U.S. passport, a business visa valid for five days only if he/she has a relevant document can be obtained only at Bole International Airport for USD 20.00. A Tourist visa can be given for one

month only. A person traveling on a diplomatic passport can obtain an entry visa free of charge. Passengers should be aware that, if they elect to obtain an entry visa at the airport, they may be delayed by as much as one or two hours. Be sure to have exact change in U.S. dollars to pay for the visa, as change for larger bills is virtually impossible to find at the visa counter and efforts to obtain change from airport banks may result in even longer delays. NOTE: In accordance with the terms of a SOFA agreement signed with the Government of Ethiopia, military personnel are allowed to travel within Ethiopia using their military I.D. cards as valid travel documents. Individuals (both military and civilian) who are visiting the African Union (AU) are required to in-brief at the U.S. Embassy prior to consultations at the AU, and out-brief at the U.S. Embassy at the conclusion of consultations at the AU prior to departure.

¶5. If a traveler is coming from or has recently visited countries where yellow fever, cholera or influenza is endemic, immunization records documenting yellow fever and/or cholera vaccination may be required to enter the country. Travelers coming directly from the U.S. or Europe are generally not asked for such documentation. Recommended vaccinations include: tetanus, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, typhoid, meningitis, poliomyelitis and, for high-risk groups, rabies.

¶6. Visitors should confirm onward flight reservations at least 72 (seventy-two) hours prior to departure to reduce the possibility of cancellation. Please note that many airlines operating in Ethiopia cancel reservations that have not been confirmed and will often refuse to reinstate them at the time of scheduled departure.

¶7. Money: Credit cards are not accepted at most hotels, except for the Sheraton and the Hilton and are not accepted at any local restaurants, shops or other facilities. Foreigners are required to pay for car rentals in hard currency. There are no ATMs in Ethiopia. You will not be able to get cash using your ATM card, but guests and visitors at the Sheraton Addis Hotel can obtain up to USD 500.00 per day using a major credit card that has a cash advance facility. For travelers on official orders, the Embassy and USAID cashiers and Bank of Abyssinia provide accommodation exchange services. The Bank of Abyssinia provides these services (cashing a personal check drawn on a U.S. bank to local currency) at both the Embassy (in the lobby of the Admin Building from 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., Monday through Friday) and USAID (2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday and 9:30 - 11:30 a.m. on Friday). The Embassy cashier provides cashing service for USD cash to local currency. The Embassy cashier hours are Monday to Thursday from 8:30 a.m. - 12:00P p.m. Friday from 8:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. and Wednesday is closed. The daily maximum is USD 500.00. Both the Embassy and USAID cashiers can sometimes provide U.S. dollars if needed, but supplies are very limited. For this reason, travelers always should arrive with enough cash to meet their needs. The current rate of exchange is approximately 9.47 Ethiopian Birr to one U.S. dollar.

¶8. Currency regulations: Currency declarations are required on entry to Ethiopia, and travelers may be asked by customs officials to show the amount of currency they have. Holders of diplomatic or official passports will not be asked. It is illegal to buy or sell foreign currency except at banks, or licensed hotels. It is also against the law to pay for purchases with foreign currency. If you wish to pay your hotel bill in cash, you must exchange the hard currency at a legal exchange point and present the receipt to the hotel at time of payment.

¶9. Health: Medical facilities in Ethiopia generally do not meet international standards. Very basic care is available at some private hospitals in Addis Ababa (and through the Embassy Health Unit for authorized users). Because of its altitude (7,000-8,000 feet above sea level), travel to Addis

Ababa is not recommended for those with pulmonary/heart conditions. This includes individuals suffering from bronchial asthma, angina pectoris, previous myocardial infarction, emphysema, congestive heart failure or sleep apnea. Individuals with sickle cell anemia should carefully consider the altitude of this post before traveling here. Dehydration is a common problem and travelers should ensure that they drink plenty of clean, bottled water, which is widely available in shops or restaurants (NOTE: Do not accept a bottle that is unsealed.). Many pharmacies in Addis Ababa are reasonably well stocked, but medications are not always standard and may not even be genuine. Travelers should bring sufficient supplies of any medications they might need while in country. Post policy is to stabilize those requiring acute care and to evacuate them immediately. All travelers are advised to closely adhere to the following guidelines:

1A. Short-term (TDY) assignments carry an added risk because of the lack of time for acclimatization. Dehydration and stress from exercise or illness compound the basic risks of high altitude. For more information, contact your health unit or the medical clearances section of the Office of Medical Services.

1B. Bring sufficient supplies of all chronic and emergency medications.

1C. Only personnel covered under the State Department's medical program, and with a valid medical clearance for Addis Ababa, are eligible for medevac at USG cost. All other visitors are required to have in their possession documentation of currently valid medical evacuation insurance sufficient to ensure evacuation by chartered air ambulance, or ensure that their agency will cover the cost.

1D. Malaria prophylaxis is not needed in Addis Ababa, but is needed should travel be extended to lowland malarial areas outside Addis Ababa. Medical facilities are not generally adequate to care for complications due to malaria. Chloroquine-resistant malaria is present at lower elevations of Ethiopia. In these areas, malaria prophylaxis containing mefloquine, doxycycline or atovaquone with proguanil, together with exposure prevention techniques (use of mosquito repellent, long-sleeve shirts and long trousers, mosquito nets, etc.) are essential.

110. Weather: Addis Ababa experiences two rainy seasons light rains from February through April, and heavy rains from June through September). The average daytime temperature in Addis Ababa is between 75 and 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Nighttime temperatures can range from the upper 30's to the low 60's depending upon the time of year. Business dress in Addis Ababa tends to be fairly formal, with jackets and ties for men and skirts or pant-suits standard for women. Travelers should bring a medium weight sweater or jacket for evenings, when the temperature drops as soon as the sun sets. Because of the altitude, the sun in Addis Ababa is quite intense, and travelers should carry and use a strong sun block.

111. Electronic equipment: Items for personal use (short-wave radio, laptop computer, still camera, video camera) can be brought into Ethiopia. Generally such items must be declared on arrival, when a customs officer will list these items in the traveler's passport. Customs officials may then check on departure to insure that these items are being taken out of the country again. CD players, commercial quality camera equipment, video or DVD players or other work-related electronic equipment or tools may be difficult to bring into the country and may be impounded by customs officials at the airport. Travelers who intend to bring such equipment into Ethiopia should provide the Embassy or USAID complete details (e.g., type of equipment, number being imported, make(s), model(s) and serial number(s)) at least 24 hours prior to their arrival so that appropriate arrangements can be made for bringing it into Ethiopia.

112. Security: The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to consider deferring travel to northern Tigray (bordering

Eritrea) and regions bordering Somalia due to security concerns. In the northern part of the country, the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict could rekindle without warning and significantly affect the border region between both countries. Transportation to this area has been disrupted on occasion, limiting the U.S. government's ability to assist its citizens. Travel to the Ogaden Region has also been severely restricted due to recent attacks and all official USG employees must obtain special permission before traveling to this region. Other areas of Ethiopia, particularly in border areas, are subject to periodic instability, and visitors planning to travel outside of Addis Ababa should consult the Consular Information Sheet and check with the Regional Security Officer for the most up-to-date security information before beginning travel.

¶13. Crime: Pick-pocketing and other petty crimes are prevalent in urban areas. There are occasional reports of thieves snatching jewelry. Visitors should exercise normal caution and not carry large sums of money or wear excessive jewelry on their persons. Visitors should carry wallets and other valuables where they will not be susceptible to pickpockets. Walking in Addis Ababa after dusk is not safe. Night driving is strongly discouraged outside of major urban areas. Armed banditry can occur on roads outside major towns or cities and may be accompanied by violence.

¶14. The loss or theft of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the U.S. Embassy located on Entoto Road and to the local police. It is advisable to leave passports, plane tickets and valuables in a hotel safe. Visitors, however, will be asked to show passports or other official identification when entering the U.S. Embassy compound.

¶15. Photography: Ethiopians are very sensitive about photography. It is strictly prohibited to photograph military installations, police or military personnel, industrial facilities, government buildings, and infrastructure facilities (roads, bridges, ports, airfields, etc.). Confiscation of film or camera or even arrest may result. Tourist photography, on the other hand, is encouraged. A good rule of thumb: If there is any doubt about whether the photograph should be taken, don't take it.

¶16. TDY Action Request: For TDYers over thirty (30) days, there will be a charge for ICASS support services. If your sponsoring agency is not signed up for ICASS services at Post, please be prepared to sign a MOU for ICASS support services upon arrival. The agency should provide Post with a written communication, generated by the traveler's headquarters, that confirms the agency will pay ICASS charges for the TDYer, provide the agency charges ICASS billing code for the TDY support to be applied, and authorize the traveler to sign the ICASS invoice generated by the TDY module. Where travel is urgent, the TDYers should bring this documentation with them to ensure there are no interruptions in the provision of service. Post will not provide any services to a TDYer staying in excess of thirty days without this documentation prior to day 31 of the TDY. To receive services such as access to TDYers computers, must in-process upon arrival.

¶17. This cable was last updated on May 15, 2007.
YAMAMOTO